

*Prelude*. When Patmore is not at his best we feel that he is making the depth of 'the thought' do duty for the depth of 'the poem'. Parts of *The Unknown Eros* seem to me open to this charge. 'Thought' cannot be converted into poetry by prosodic skill. Mr Reid puts his finger on Patmore's essential weakness as a poet when he says that 'he was never faced with the kind of intellectual and emotional problems which shake men to the very centre and which in the solving, purge the spirit and refine the personality'.

The great merit of Mr Reid's book is that it drives us into taking fresh stock of Patmore's prose. We have Patmore as literary critic, for instance. He attacks impressionistic criticism in an age which virtually knew no other; he stresses impersonality as a condition of great literature; he points out that 'bad morality is bad art' and this understanding of morality goes far beyond the didactic. Faced with particular judgments he is equally impressive; with regard to Shakespeare, he insists—at a time of Swinburnian ecstasy—on seeing the plays as plays and seeing them whole. As for his contemporaries—there is 'the high pressure' of Rossetti's verse, but 'I find an impression of cold instead of warmth, as if the fire had a salamander instead of a heart at its centre'; and considering his friend Francis Thompson, he praises the technical skill, but points out the 'cheap sublimities'.

But the literary criticism is of minor importance compared with his religious writing. Patmore's constant stress on a full recognition of the implications of the doctrine of the Incarnation, particularly with reference to marriage, is doubly remarkable—for being written when it was, and for enforcing so eloquently the most fruitful of religious speculation today. St Paul's advice, 'Glorify and bear God in your body', might be taken as an epigraph for all of Patmore's work, and if Mr Reid doesn't send us immediately back to reconsider the *Collected Poems*, then he certainly does send us to *The Rod, The Root and The Flower* and makes us see that is a spiritual document with classical status.

IAN GREGOR

RACINE: CONFESSIONS; Unpublished Sonnets. Translated from the French into verse by Walter Roberts. (Mowbrays; 13s. 6d.)

*Confessions* by Racine! One rubs one's eyes on reading such a title! Surely no writer between St Augustine and Rousseau had used this name for a work? But yes! It is Racine's name, not Jean-Jacques's, that stands on the cover. Have we here then a discovery—a collection of religious lyrics by the author of the *Cantiques spirituels*, *Athalie* and other works? Alas! no. There is not a shred of evidence that these anonymous sonnets are by the great playwright. The confused introduc-

tion, by 'Rosita, de l'Académie racinienne', to the French edition of the contents of the MS. whence these sonnets are taken makes this unwillingly clear. The poems were published in 1692 as the work of Eustache Le Noble and again in 1912; and even though the attribution to Le Noble is doubtful, there is nothing whatever to show that Racine may have been their author. The latest French edition calls itself: *Racine: Poésies religieuses inconnues* (Editions Pierre Clairac, Paris, 1954); it is the English translator who, with doubtful honesty, invents the title *Confessions*.

The poems consist in 128 sonnets, each of which is a paraphrase, verse by verse, of Psalms 6, 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, 143 and 20. The second part of Rosita's edition, which is not included in the English one, is a translation of thirty other psalms—one psalm to a sonnet. The English renderings are agreeable to read and, as far as I have checked them, accurate. The poems, which are in no wise 'confessions' since they are merely paraphrases and translations, were perhaps worth rescuing, but not at the cost of a *supercherie*.

CUTHBERT GIRDLESTONE

INTRODUCTION TO MISTRAL. By Richard Aldington. (Heinemann; 25s.)

This book really fulfils the promise of its title, since it awakens the desire to become even better acquainted with Mistral and his work. This is due not only to Mr Aldington's skill as a writer but even more to that enthusiasm which enables him to understand both the literary problems which confront linguistic minorities, and the special tempo of rural as opposed to urban communities.

Occasionally, indeed, we may feel that he deprecates other writers unduly by comparison with his subject. Thus his contrast between the *Félibrige* and the Symbolist school can hardly be justified: the differences between a literary-linguistic association with certain clearly defined aims, and a group of poets sharing to a very limited extent the same conception of art, are so wide as to invalidate any analogy. Moved by the same admiration, Mr Aldington, in a few instances, appears to blind himself to certain weaknesses in Mistral. Thus he notes no inherent contradiction in Mistral's attitude towards the expulsion of the teaching congregations (1904, not 1880, as stated on p. 162): 'he deplored this attack on liberty, adding however, "it is not my affair".' It is reasonable to point out that Péguy, at that time a militant anti-clerical, and his friend, Bernard Lazare, a Jew, both felt that it was very much their 'affair'—not from love of Catholicism but out of respect for freedom.